

THE DELIUS SOCIETY

NEWS LETTER APRIL 1963

Secretary: Mrs. B. Ruffle,
Doughty Cottage,
Haverfield Gdns.,
Kew, Richmond.
Surrey.

Members will no doubt be surprised to receive two newsletters within the space of a week, but it was felt by the committee that, although there was a delay in issuing the previous newsletter, this one should go out on time, especially since it contains news about the Annual General Meeting - on a separate sheet - for which members will require as much notice as possible.

In future, it is hoped that the newsletter will be issued once every two or three months, depending on the news available. This means that members can expect not less than four issues every year.

Also enclosed is a list of members as at the 1st April, 1963. If there are any errors or omissions, would members please inform the Treasurer, to whom all correspondence relating to membership and subscriptions should now be addressed. Her address is as follows:

Miss A. Todd,
9 Woodstock Road,
Alperton, Middx.

It is most encouraging to note that within a year of our inaugural meeting last April, the membership has climbed to a hundred. We welcome as our hundredth member Mr. Felix Aprahamian, music critic of The Sunday Times. It is hoped that Mr. Aprahamian will be able to attend the Annual General Meeting, at which he will be glad to answer members' questions concerning the work of the Delius Trust.

Members who read the Gramophone will have read the letter from one of our members, Mr. G.B. Slater, suggesting that the society is apparently impotent. Although the newsletter has been dormant for four months, the committee can assure members that the society is still alive and kicking, and if Mr. Slater cares to attend the Annual General Meeting, we hope he will agree that his guinea subscription has not been wasted.

Regarding the subscription, members may be interested to know that the Delius Association of Florida Inc. has recently held a Delius Festival in Jacksonville. Their subscription rate is \$5.00 a year (35/-) and life membership is \$100.00! (£35). Perhaps an English member would like to suggest a life membership fee at the Annual General Meeting, of, say, twenty guineas!

At the Jacksonville Festival the main work performed was *Koanga*, in what was obviously an apt setting. The guest of honour was Harold C. Schoenberg, music critic of the New York Times, who some members may remember for his letter from America which used to be a feature of our English 'Gramophone' magazine. It seems there was also an exhibition featuring some 150 items at the local Cumner Gallery of Art.

The recent continental tour of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra did not ignore Delius. Kempe conducted 'Eventyr' (probably repeating his London precedent, and ignoring the shouts!) at six German centres. These took place from the 15th January to the 22nd, and the Delius tone poem was heard at Wuppertal, Viersen, Leverkusen, Bad Godesberg, Essen and Bremen. On 29th, 30th and 31st the First Cuckoo was heard at Bratislava, Cracow and Warsaw. Also on 1st February, again in Warsaw, there was "A walk to the Paradise Garden". So far we have no news as to what was heard in Russia, but we expect to have some news soon.

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Kempe is shortly to be a guest conductor with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. On April 10th with John Shirley Quirk and combined BBC Chorus and Choral Society, Sea Drift is to be performed. On March 30th, the second violin sonata was heard in an early morning recital by two young artists, Trevor Williams and Beryl Woods. Referring to Sea Drift, one of the committee Dr. Gibson observes:

"John Shirley Quirk was the soloist in the performance of this work at last year's prom's.

I have known Shirley Quirk for several years, and about a year ago discussed with Mr. Shirley Quirk the possibility of his doing some Delius songs for our Society, in particular the Nietzsche Songs. Mr. Shirley Quirk was definitely interested at the time."

In the April edition of Records and Recording, it was stated that the conductor Carl Schuricht recently conducted "Sea Drift" in Essen. He will be here this month to conduct a concert at the Festival Hall on 9th April, which will, however, not include any Delius. Apparently, he knew Delius when he was a young conductor, and we hope that next time he visits England he will be able to give us a talk on Delius as he knew him.

As members will know, CBS have recently released a complete LP devoted to Delius, consisting of Brigg Fair: Dance Rhapsody No.2; ~~On~~ hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring, In a Summer Garden, played by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Ormandy. This is a review from Mr. C.D. Barnard, a committee member:-

Any record of Delius' works is welcome, but it is gratifying to find an American orchestra playing it so well, as well as playing it at all. This is not meant to sound unkind, but, whatever people say, I always think of Delius as being essentially an English composer, which in this case is synonymous with being played by an English orchestra.

The Americans here have definitely brought it off, in my opinion. Ormandy has adopted a different approach to Beecham, which is broadly to keep the music going at a brisk pace. This does not mean that it gallops all the time, but, where Beecham tends to slow down at the end of a phrase or variation, Ormandy does not.

I think I would say that Brigg Fair and Dance Rhapsody No.2 are as successful if not more so than on Beecham's HMV recording. The Cuckoo and Summer Garden are not quite so good, but are still most enjoyable.

BRIGG FAIR

The opening is quite delightful; the flute playing and tone is quite the best I have ever heard, although this may be a reflection of the recording, which is excellent as far as the stereo version is concerned.

The middle section is taken faster than Beecham's. Not too fast, but less dreamily. The odd percussion comes through too heavily here, but I suspect that this is a fault of modern recording. But it is a very minor point.

The loud finale comes over very well, the brass blazing through most majestically, and the final tune on the oboe has just that dreamy quality that is required to end this piece in the right mood.

DANCE RHAPSODY No.2

This is the gem of the record. I did not know it before the Beecham recording, but this is even better. The short section with 'bouncing' chords on page two of the score - which occurs throughout the piece - is taken quicker than the opening bars of the piece. It is marked 'quicker' on the score, and sounds much better than the Beecham recording, where it is treated somewhat lovingly, which it does not need. This is Delius at his happiest, and should be played accordingly.

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ON HEARING THE FIRST CUCKOO IN SPRING

This is played with full orchestra, which makes it sound a bit heavy. The opening is too fast, but it does not spoil the general effect. Ormandy obviously treats this as a cool and sunny spring day, although the cuckoo sounds warm enough.

IN A SUMMER GARDEN

A lovely opening. Real warmth here, with the woodwind painting the picture beautifully. It is the middle section that calls for the most comment. It is taken at about twice the speed Beecham takes it. Although this does not spoil the tune in the strings, the woodwind accompaniment sounds very rushed. It may be that after repeated hearings one would come to accept it, but at the first few hearings it seems to strike rather a jarring note. After this section, however, the piece flows on happily and were it not for the middle section I should give this almost top marks.

I bought this record without hearing it beforehand, a thing I rarely do, but I do urge every member of the Delius Society to do so as well, unless they are able to hear it easily before they buy it. I am sure they will not be disappointed, although they may disapprove of some of the sounds. But this makes the perfection of the rest even more enjoyable.

I hope it augurs well for Delius records in 1963. The next landmark should be the third record from HMV in the Delius centenary issue, of Beecham's hitherto unpublished 'Songs of Sunset'. Unfortunately, the other side will be non-Delius, but I shall be quite satisfied with just 'Songs of Sunset'.

TRIP TO GREZ-SUR-LOING

It has been suggested amongst the committee that a trip might be arranged for members and friends travelling in a group, to visit Grez on a holiday weekend. Since Whitsun is approaching fast, and this would seem to be about the best time of the year, it would probably have to wait until 1964. A thing like this would need much planning, so the Committee would be pleased to hear from members of their reactions. Perhaps the matter could be raised at the Annual General Meeting in May.

It is difficult at this stage to give any indication of cost, but a three day inclusive tour, London to Grez and back with accommodation, should be about £20. Obviously, there would be little point in going unless we could see over the house where Delius lived, but we understand that this should not prove too difficult to arrange with the present owner.

Finally, members will be interested to learn that arrangements have been made for the complete recording of 'A Village Romeo and Juliet' to be made with the Sadlers Wells Chorus and orchestra. The expected date of issue will be announced at a later date. In the meantime, the Beecham recording, not previously published, of the 'Songs of Sunset' is due to be issued in June or July. This, we feel, should keep all members happy for the rest of 1963.

DAVID SIMMONS.

(CHAIRMAN)